

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended)

A welding method using a non-consumable electrode, in which the electrode is supplied with energy from a power source after the ignition of an electric arc between the electrode and the workpieces to be joined, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, prior to the welding process proper, i.e., after the ignition of the electric arc, a start program is performed without introduction of an additional material, by which the electrode is supplied with pulsed energy in the form of current or voltage pulses over a presettable period of time, thus causing the liquid melt bath to oscillate or vibrate, and that the welding process proper is carried out after termination of the start program.

2. (currently amended)

A tack welding method using a non-consumable electrode and without introduction of an additional material, in which the electrode is supplied with energy from a power source after the ignition of an electric arc between the electrode and the workpieces to be joined, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, prior to the welding process proper, a start program is performed, by

which the electrode is supplied with pulsed energy in the form of current or voltage pulses over a presettable period of time, thus causing the liquid melt bath to oscillate or vibrate, and that the welding process proper is carried out after termination of the start program by supplying the electrode with constant energy.

3. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the electrode is supplied with constant energy during the welding process proper.

4. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 2-~~or 3~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the introduction of energy during the start program is controlled in a manner that the mean value of the pulsed energy corresponds with the amplitude of the set welding current for the subsequent, constant-energy welding process proper.

5. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 1, ~~any one of claims 1 to 4,~~ ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the parameters of the start program and, in particular, the pulse parameters like pulse height, pulse

width, pulse frequency, pulse break and, possibly, curve shape are freely settable at the power source.

6. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 1, ~~any one of claims 1 to 5,~~ characterized in that wherein the parameters of the start program by a control and/or evaluation device provided in the welding apparatus or in the power source are automatically fixed or varied as a function of the parameters of the welding process proper.

7. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the parameters of the start program are automatically fixed or varied as a function of the amplitude of the welding current used for the welding process proper.

8. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 6-~~or 7~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein that the parameters of the start program are automatically fixed or varied as a function of the material thickness and/or material of the workpieces to be welded or further parameters of the welding process proper.

9. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 6, ~~any one of claims 6 to 8,~~  
~~characterized in that wherein~~ several start programs having  
different parameters or curve shapes are defined and stored, and  
that said defined and stored start programs are used and/or  
varied by the control and/or evaluation device to select the  
parameters for the start program.

10. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 1, ~~any one of claims 1 to 9,~~  
~~characterized in that wherein~~ the start program is carried out  
for a presettable period of time after the ignition of the  
electric arc.

11. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 10, ~~characterized in that~~  
wherein during said presettable period of time after the ignition  
of the electric arc the electrode is supplied with constant  
energy.

12. (currently amended)

A method according to claim 11, ~~characterized in that~~  
wherein the electrode, during the presettable period of time  
after the ignition of the electric arc, is supplied with constant  
energy different from that supplied during the welding process  
proper.